



Department of State
Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team

Mosul, Iraq
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NINEWA PROVINCE BULLETIN:

“CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES SAFE,” ACCORDING TO STATE BOARD OF ANTIQUITIES INSPECTOR QAIS RASHID

The week of May 17th provided an exciting opportunity for the Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) to support Iraq’s State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH) with an assessment of conditions at some of the most important cultural heritage sites in Ninewa Province. The PRT hosted Mr. Qais Hussein Rashid, Director General of Excavations from SBAH and Ms. Diane Siebrandt, the Cultural Heritage Officer for the Department of State, US Embassy Baghdad.



Figure 1 - HATRA, UNESCO World Heritage Site (photo: Siebrandt)

This visit marked the first time since 2003 that any SBAH representatives have visited these important sites. The overall report was extremely positive and provided a good baseline for future conservation and restoration.



**Figure 2 - Hatra relief
(photo: Wolf)**

The total number of cultural heritage sites in Northern Iraq is too numerous to visit during a short fact-finding mission, so the team concentrated on the most significant sites, including Hatra, inscribed on the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites and the ancient city of Nineveh, Nimrud, Khorsabad (Dur Sharrukin), the Mosul Cultural Museum, the al Hadba Leaning Minaret in the old city of Mosul, and the St. Elijah Chaldean Monastery ruins.

The main goals of the visit were to assess site conditions, determine restoration needs, and coordinate long-range planning efforts between GOI offices, the U.S. government, the Ninewa Provincial governing bodies, site managers, and the international conservation community. Even though the sites showed signs of deterioration due to the lack of onsite archaeologists and conservators, none of the sites showed signs of looting or extensive vandalism.

The Mosul Cultural Museum, repository of many of the treasures of the region, requires extensive renovation. Experts will be brought to the province to provide technical advice on state-of-the art security, storage, and exhibition planning for the museum. The overarching goal is to allow the Mosul Cultural Museum to retrieve their collection from Baghdad where it



Figure 3 - Mosul Cultural Museum
(photo: Siebrandt)

was moved for safe-keeping prior to the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. The collection, which includes priceless treasures from excavations at Nimrud and other sites in the Province, will not be returned until security measures at the museum are improved.



Figure 4 - Ninevah
(photo: Siebrandt)

The week-long fact-finding mission resulted in a plan of action for each site. PRT staff members are working with local officials and SBAH to develop long-term management strategies to be implemented jointly with the assistance of outside partners. In addition to UNESCO, the PRT hopes to involve universities, museums, and NGOs from around the world to assist in the conservation activities. Mosul University's Archeological Department will become active partners in the restoration activities that will result in development of active partnerships with other interested universities and non-governmental organizations.

Immediate actions include for the sites include:

- site clean-up and implementation of site protection measures (fencing and signage);
- removal of illegal agriculture and building construction from the sites;
- implementation of site surveys with assistance from military engineers;
- renovation of the Mosul Cultural Museum;
- training of local specialists and archaeologists in conservation and restoration practices including documentation, stone masonry, and earthen architecture conservation, and
- generation of jobs and economic opportunities as part of a larger long range tourism economic development planning effort.

As a result of this important visit, the assessment team believes the cultural heritage resources of Ninewa will become a major economic driver for the region and contribute to the long-term economic success of Iraq, as well as serve as a significant source of pride for the Iraqi people.



Figure 5 - Nineveh Nergal Gate (photo: Siebrandt)